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Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations: cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries

Letter dated 20 August 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

On behalf of the Presidency of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the community of Portuguese-speaking Countries to the sixty-third session of the General Assembly, under item 117 (f) of the provisional agenda, Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present document and its annex could be considered under the above-mentioned item of the provisional agenda of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Jorge **Lobo de Mesquita**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

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Annex to the letter dated 20 August 2008 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Portugal to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Report of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries to the sixty-third session of the General Assembly

A. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 61/223, decided to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-third session a sub-item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries.

2. The present report portrays progress achieved in cooperation between the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and specialized agencies and other bodies and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as activities pursued through regional cooperation for the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

B. Political strategic approach

3. At the sixth conference of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, held in Guinea-Bissau, on 17 July 2006, a declaration was adopted underlining the need for the Community to develop its strategic action in a perspective of interaction with different levels of regional integration and cooperation in which its member States participate. In the same declaration, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries summit took note of advances in the international projection of the Community, as well as the need to consolidate it, namely through the strengthening of relations with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and through the establishment of partnerships with regional and subregional organizations.

4. Pursuing this strategy, the Community has reached a political understanding recommending the commemoration of cooperation agreements with a number of regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations. In that regard, the executive secretariat of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification will sign a cooperation agreement, and political agreements have been reached with the African Union, the Council of Europe, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Organisation internationale de la francophonie for the signing of cooperation agreements, in accordance with the pertinent dispositions of the Charter of the United Nations that encourage activities through regional cooperation for the promotion of the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

5. An important development was the signature, in November 2007, of a memorandum of understanding with the European Commission, which we expect will be the basis for great improvements in the multilateral Community cooperation framework. At the moment, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries secretariat is developing its organizational structure in compliance with the European Community project cycle management framework.

C. Political cooperation

6. At the political level, the Community and its member States, in partnership with ECOWAS, deployed efforts with a view towards introducing the issue of Guinea-Bissau onto the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. That political development led the Community and all its member States to become members of the specific country configuration on Guinea-Bissau.

7. The executive secretary of the Community took part in a meeting of the specific country configuration on 23 April 2008, in which he addressed the Peacebuilding Commission, expressing the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries position on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, on prospects of peacebuilding in that country and on the work of the Commission.

8. The Community, ECOWAS, Portugal and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) initiated the International Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau, aimed at supporting peacebuilding efforts in that country. In that framework, the Community has been maintaining close coordination with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Guinea-Bissau, with UNOGBIS and other partners engaged in peacebuilding efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

9. The Community and its member States have been deeply committed to the stabilization of the situation in Timor-Leste, the newest member of our organization. In the Security Council meetings on Timor-Leste, the Community Group in New York has been coordinating positions and adding its voice to the deliberations of the Council. Some of our member States are deeply involved in developments in Timor-Leste and are prominent partners of the United Nations and of the Timorese Government in the building of that nation.

10. The Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries executive secretariat, in partnership with the Defence Commission of the Portuguese Parliament, organized on 25 and 26 March 2008, a conference on international security challenges and cooperation within the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries. The conference tackled issues such as international security challenges and new security threats; the role of international organizations in prevention and resolution of threats in Africa; the specific role of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries; and cooperation in the defence and security area involving Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries. The conference had the participation, among other prominent personalities, of the President of the Portuguese Parliament; the Portuguese Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defence; the executive secretary of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries; the President of the ECOWAS Commission; the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs and the executive representative for the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone.

11. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) initiated contacts with the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries executive secretariat with a view to establishing a cooperation partnership between the two institutions, allowing the Community to benefit from the experience and knowledge of UNOPS in its area of activity. In a first meeting, held at the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries headquarters, the representative of the UNOPS Africa Bureau explained the work of the organization, areas of activity and projects in which it is involved. On a second visit to the executive secretariat, more specific details and

aspects of a possible cooperation were discussed, as well as the next steps to be accomplished by both organizations to that end.

D. Millennium Development Goals

12. The Sixth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries was on the theme Millennium Development Goals: challenges and the contribution of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries. On 5 June 2008, CPLP took the initiative to hold a conference in the framework of the Development Days, sponsored by the Portuguese Government, with a view to assessing the fulfilment of the Summit recommendations and the accomplishment, by Community member States, of the Millennium Development Goals. The conference had the participation of high representatives of member States from the areas of cooperation, diplomacy and foreign affairs and researchers from academic institutions in Portugal, the United States of America and the United Nations Institute for Advanced Studies. Presentations were made on the present status of progress on the Millennium Development Goals, objectives achieved by Community member States, and challenges faced by those countries in their development processes.

13. The meeting reached the conclusion that a group of member States has good prospects to fulfil most of the Millennium Development Goals (Cape Verde and Mozambique), while others recognized serious constraints (Guinea-Bissau). In that framework, the need to maintain the current international efforts of development aid to Community countries was recognized. Analysis was presented by the researchers concerning threats to the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals by member States unless more sustainable solutions are designed. Some experiments carried out in the African context were presented, as well as new operative instruments that might be appropriated by Member States for sustainable progress in the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals.

E. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

14. The Community has been developing a meaningful cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on a number of initiatives. For the third consecutive year, the Community and UNESCO commemorated the day of the Portuguese language at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The presence of the Director-General of UNESCO and the highest officials of the organization at the ceremony, which was also attended by the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries executive secretary, showed, not only the increasing importance of the Portuguese language at the international level, but was also indicative of the partnership between the Community and UNESCO.

15. The Community, which is growing stronger, and UNESCO held a meeting on the establishment of a media content shared platform between CPLP public television operators, with the objective of increasing multilateral cooperation among media professionals of the Portuguese-speaking countries.

16. Two projects in partnership with UNESCO are at the formulation stage. One is a workshop aimed at television journalists for capacity-building on HIV/AIDS prevention. The project will be developed in close partnership between the Community, the Division for the Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace of UNESCO, the Portuguese Commission for UNESCO and UNAIDS. The workshop,

which will take place during the second quarter of 2008, will seek a commitment for the long term, to support information on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. A second project, a partnership between the Community and the Portuguese Commission for UNESCO, is a workshop for the training of journalists of Community member States on the reporting of elections, with a view to joining Community observer missions and reporting on the process of ballot scrutiny, the period before and after elections and strengthening transparency and rigour in media reporting.

F. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

17. In March 2006, an agreement was signed between the Community and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), entitled the Regional technical cooperation project in building capacities on land ownership regime, management of land and legal aspects, aimed at Community member States. The first stage of the project has been concluded; the second stage will be launched immediately after the mobilization of resources for its financing.

18. In May 2008, a technical cooperation project was signed aimed at the formulation of a south/south and north/south cooperation programme for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. That project, covering all Community member States, aims to contribute to sustainable development and the reduction of poverty in the African Portuguese-speaking countries and Timor-Leste, through two specific objectives: national capacity-building for intersectional and participative planning in combating desertification; a conception of a Community programme to combat desertification, aimed at the implementation of a cooperation programme to implement the Convention as a central element in combating land degradation, the improvement of livelihood for populations in affected areas and the management and conservation of natural resources with a view, as well, to facing climate change.

G. United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

19. A protocol between the Community and the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification has been finalized, and will be signed as soon as possible by the heads of both organizations. The protocol aims, among other objectives, to establish a platform for joint action and cooperation to combat desertification and soils deterioration and to confront drought and shortage of water by supporting the efforts of Community member States in facing the root causes of the problem through implementation of the Convention.

H. International Fund for Agricultural Development

20. On 8 November 2008, the Community and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) signed a cooperation agreement to combat rural poverty in Portuguese-speaking developing countries. The agreement aims at consolidating their partnership and helping those countries to better manage their resources and combat rural poverty. Currently, an assessment is being made on concrete cooperation actions under the agreement.

I. International Labour Organization

21. The Portuguese language continues to be used in the international conferences and working meetings of the International Labour Organization (ILO), in two of the four normative commissions: fisheries and norms application. An increase in the number of publications translated into Portuguese testifies to the increasing use of the Portuguese language at the International Labour Organization.

22. The partnership between the Community and the International Labour Organization bureau in Lisbon, established by the cooperation agreement signed on 4 August 2005, is being fully implemented. The agreement establishes an interactive platform between the Governments of Community member States for the exchange of information and experience in the framework of social security, inspection of working conditions and in the fight against child labour.

23. A partnership between the Community, ILO and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, with the support of the Portuguese and Brazilian Governments, led to the holding of a training course on combating child labour in the Portuguese-speaking countries, held in Torino, Italy, from 11 to 15 December 2006. The programme had the following objectives: capacity-building for management and technical personnel in combating child labour, awareness-raising, collection of statistical data, pedagogical tools, gender issues, operational activities, implementation of the International Labour Organization Conventions 138 and 182, conformity of national legislations and the strengthening of social dialogue and civil society participation.

J. World Intellectual Property Organization

24. The secretariat of the World Intellectual Property Organization formulated a cooperation programme with the Community in the area of authorship rights and related rights, in conformity with a resolution in that field adopted by the meeting of Community Ministers of Culture. It is our expectation that that programme will be implemented in the foreseeable future.

K. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

25. In November 2006, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Community and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, stating areas of cooperation between the Community and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCR). Consultations are now taking place with a view to organizing the first forum on human rights in the space of the Community, with the main objective of elaborating a platform for joint action in that very important area.

L. World Bank

26. In partnership with the World Bank, the Community is preparing the launching of a lusophone education network in view of accelerating the response of the education sector of the member States to the HIV/AIDS pandemics, through the adoption of a three-year plan of action, stating the objectives, the expected results, priority areas, an implementation calendar of its activities, costs and responsibilities for each of the partners in the initiative.

M. Portuguese unit of United Nations Radio

27. On 25 April 2008, a cooperation agreement between the executive secretariat of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries and the Portuguese unit of United Nations Radio was signed, in New York, at United Nations Headquarters, by the Community Executive Secretary and the Department of Public Information, News and Media Division Director. The agreement calls for the exchange of information on the signatories' respective activities and of news content; the joint analysis of the feasibility of creating an internship programme for media and press professionals from Community member States; cooperation to produce joint conferences, seminars, round tables with potential partners in order to promote United Nations Radio journalistic content and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries website and mission to a Portuguese-speaking audience and cooperation to produce joint journalistic initiatives to promote cultural diversity within Community member States.

N. Other issues

28. The Community member States are strengthening cooperation in other vital areas of their development, for which cooperation with United Nations specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies will be crucial. The fourth meeting of Community Environment Ministers, held in Luanda, Angola, in April 2008, adopted a plan of action with a view to promoting the full implementation of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries cooperation platform. United Nations assistance has been identified as a crucial element in that effort. The twelfth Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries Council of Ministers adopted a resolution on the development of a policy on the seas in the Community framework; the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries secretariat intends to approach the UNESCO International Oceanographic Commission to seek assistance to implement the endeavour. Moreover, the twelfth meeting adopted a resolution on renewable energies and the protection of the environment, recommending the holding of a forum on renewable energies in the Community framework for the exchange of experience, the establishment of partnerships, the identification and implementation of projects, transfer of technologies and institutional capacity-building and strengthening.

O. Recommendations and conclusions

29. Strengthening relationships with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and with regional, subregional and intergovernmental organizations is a cornerstone of Community activity and strategy for its international projection. In the past two years, since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/223, relations with United Nations bodies and other organizations have registered impressive development.

30. It is the wish and expectation of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries executive secretariat that the sixty-third session of the General Assembly will adopt a resolution taking stock of the developments portrayed in the present report, as a contribution to the international projection of our organization and to the strengthening of relations with the entire United Nations system.

Lisbon, 13 August 2008